AND IF I WERE WHITE

A REPLY TO THE IF I WERE A NEGRO SERIES BY PROMINENT WHITE WRITERS

by

CHANCELLOR WILLIAMS

SHAW PUBLISHING COMPANY
1311 G Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

"Those of us who would serve our generation must proceed in some such fashion as this"
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To

Henry A. Wallace, Pearl S. Buck

Eleanor Roosevelt, Lillian Smith

and to the memory of the late

Wendell L. Willkie

"Those of us who would serve our generation must proceed in some such fashion as this."

Chancellor Williams.

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"So all the peoples of the earth may know the embattled destination of the free."

MacLeish—

FOREWORD

This is a message—a special delivery message—to every white man and woman in the United States. Every effort will be made to see that it is generally received. As indicated elsewhere, it is a reply to a series of articles by prominent white writers—all interested in better race relations, a better America, and a better world. This reply, however, covers much wider ground than the articles in question, and undertakes to go to the roots of our domestic ills which, this writer believes, are also the roots of international strife.

The significance of this effort to American life was considered to be such that copies of the original manuscript were sent to fifty outstanding Americans for advance comments and criticism. In the letter submitting the manuscript the author stated:

> "Your Judgment will be used as a guide in modifying or revising the work before it is published. This means that the author is more interested in finding the soundest views on the question than he is in presenting his own opinions. It seems to me that those of us who really wish to serve our generation should proceed in some such manner before 'breaking into print'."

I now wish to express here my heartfelt gratitude for the large number of painstaking and most helpful criticisms which were received. Among those who submitted comments or criticism were Mr. Oswald Garrison Villard, Dr. Edwin R. Embree, Congressman Adam C. Powell, Jr., Dr. Paul F. Douglass, Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, Mr. Howard Fast, Miss Frances H. Williams, Dr. George Winston Smith, Mr. Dutton Ferguson, Dr. Ernst Correll, Mr. Victor Lawson, Dr. Carolyn F. Ware, Dr. Robert W. Briggs, Miss Pearl Buck, Mr. Joseph T. Tamura, Dr. Leonard Z. Johnson, Mr. William A. Caudill, Mr. Frank McCallister, Dr. Charles H. Wesley, Mr. Howard Taylor, Mr. Ben Ray Redman, Mr. Elton Raymond Shaw, and others.

While these distinguished leaders in their respective fields offered criticism, none of them are in any way responsible for the opinions of the author herein expressed.

Chancellor Williams.

TO BEGIN WITH

(Sometimes called an "Introduction")

The series of articles by prominent white writers titled *If I Were A Negro,* are so extraordinary, in some cases, that a reply by someone who *is* a Negro seems imperative for the following reasons:

1. The series by different writers appeared over a long period of many months in a magazine of nation-wide circulation [1] and they have created widespread interest and discussion among white and colored people.

2. Some of the articles are highly controversial in nature, suggesting very objectionable solutions to racism.

3. The articles were written by friends of the Negro people and, apparently, they were especially requested by a colored editor to state what they would do if they were Negroes.

The idea seems to be that Negroes are somewhat bewildered and lost, and that they have need to appeal to their white friends to tell them what to do. These friends are the cultural descendants of Lincoln, Whittier, Garrison, Stowe, Lovejoy, John Brown, and an almost endless line of millions of white Americans who, because of their own inherent decency, have stood steadfast and unmovable for equal rights for non-white peoples. The colored people of the United States will never forget them.

1 *The Negro Digest,* August, September, October, November, December 1944; and January and February 1945.

And if I, for one, cannot accept all of the advice offered—such as, for example, "The Bedroom Approach to Racism" [2] —it is not from any lack of appreciation of the friendly interest and sincere effort of those trying to promote good will and fellowship between the races. No. My effort here is primarily to reach our enemies and, in passing, frankly point out to our friends the most important social facts which they overlook and unfortunate misconceptions they entertain.

Chief among these is the fact that there is really no race "problem." What is called a problem is nothing but a smoke screen, thrown up to hide the white man's unwillingness to treat non-white people as he treats white people. What this means is that if indeed it is a problem to treat others as one would wish to be treated, then, insofar as race relations are concerned, it is entirely the white man's own problem—that is to say, it is a problem to those white people who have been trained to hate colored people.

No one knows whether the American Bilboes and Rankins outnumber the Willkies and Wallaces, but one thing is certain: The latter are the *Keepers of the Flame,* the custodians of the best in the Nation's tradition, the hope of the present and of the future. They are America. This point is vitally important, for it is the hope centered in this kind of America that accounts for the willingness of Negroes to fight and die for it—even fight for the right to die for it.

2 In the December issue of the *Digest.*

4. I wish to reach the masses of white America—those who have never heard from a Negro or, for that matter, any white person either, on inter-race relations. The people really concerned know nothing about the work of inter-racial committees or conferences. The leaders do not report the results of their efforts to the people. The "leaders" are so far from the "led" that one wonders how they expect to change the social conditions over which they confer. Are such efforts effective? They are just as effective as an anti-lynching mass meeting in New York on a Mississippi mob. They are wasted effort. The impassioned speeches are wasted upon people who are one hundred per cent in accord. The mob does not hear them. Indeed, the masses of white America have never known what the masses of colored people think and feel. They can't know. The "system" and "our way of life" take care of that.

Not laws, but education will solve the problem, many leaders tell us. Will education solve the problem? What kind of education? Surely, no one is talking about the kind of education we now receive. And if they have "in mind" some educational program expressly designed to check color prejudice and to promote cooperation and good will between the races, when and where is this education to begin?

5. The fifth and last reason for writing this message—for that is exactly what it is—has already

been stated in another way, but is repeated now for emphasis: We Negroes (I always use the term under protest) "raise too much Cain" *among ourselves* over racial injustice and *not enough with white people who are responsible for it.* As in slavery time, we seem so happy and unconcerned that white people generally conclude that the present system is as it should be. Too many colored people are still "cussing at the Big Gate"—out of the hearing of the people who should hear.

The historian of the future, looking back on our age, will ponder long in an effort to explain how it came about that a supposedly civilized people let the theme of their society be: "You must look just like me, or I won't like you!"

I

What Our White Friends Tell Us To Do

In the series of articles, *If I Were A Negro,* the writers say they would do the following things, if they were Negroes:

1. Fight for full employment for all as the key to better race relations.

2. Join unions and all liberal-progressive movements.

3. Join other minority groups in their fight for their rights.

4. Never let the Bilboes and Rankins impair faith in America.

5. Go into technical fields whether they are open or not.

6. Study biochemistry as the crowning effort, in order to develop a scientific process to discolor the Negro.

7. Fight. Avenge the deaths of all Negroes who have been lynched and of those who have died for their country, fighting for a liberty and a freedom which only the whites fully enjoy.

8. Fight now. Resist like the American col-

onies, and reject the slow inching along theory of gradual betterment, to be realized in some distant future. Fight to live as men *today*.

9. Stop dying to perpetuate the white man's "way of life"—a way of life from which you are excluded.

10. Amalgamate. Lose racial identity by intermarrying.

Thus speak our friends. Some of the advice, indeed most of it, is sound. As I read much of the other, I wondered if the writers were really sincere or merely joking. For example, the suggestion of one that intermarriage be forced by law seemed so ridiculous that I did not include it in the list above.

The essential point of my reply to all this is to question the basic philosophy underlying it all; namely, that it is desirable to be white. The white man has glorified himself and his material progress so long that he believes not only that he is the best among human-kind, but also that he has had an amazing success in making non-white peoples accept this idea. The Negro people in the United States have been almost completely indoctrinated along this line. Hundreds of Negro "leaders" and thousands of Negroes generally who protest the loudest against the doctrine of white superiority actually believe the white man is superior. They unconsciously prove this in so many ways that there is no question about the absolute truth of this statement.

First of all, they prove it by accepting amalgamation as a general program for the solution of the race "problem." Other evidence of belief in white superiority is established by such things as the desire for residence in an exclusively white neighborhood; the "color craze" within the race, setting up those with very light complexions as a superior class; membership in many college fraternities and sororities determined almost entirely by color; poking fun at darker Negroes, particularly dark girls and women; such expressions as, "A white man told me . . .", meaning that the truth was established beyond question because a white man had said it—and so on *ad infinitum*. So the white man, from his point of view at least, has done an excellent job in Caucasianizing the American Negro—so much so that you will find some of the blackest men viewing life through eyes of blue.

No wonder, then, that our white friends, in advising us, begin with the assumption that we all long, as a matter of course, to be white.

One writer said that while the present is in the hands of white men, the future of the Negro is in his own hands. This is not true. We have been told this same thing for generations. Become worthy of citizenship. Acquire property. Learn a trade. Get an education. Be respectable. Wait. Yet everyone knows that all this is just so much bosh. The editor of a South Carolina newspaper has given us the true answer. "Let us be plain," he said.

"What we mean by white supremacy is that the most respectable, the wealthiest, the most cultured or most highly educated Negro is less than the lowest and most ignorant white man among us, even though that white man may be a criminal. This is really what we mean, and we should be honest enough to say so. We have marked out a place for the Negro. We intend to keep him there no matter how high he may seem to rise." And this is so, East, West, North, and South. The colored lawyer, physician, or Ph.D. can't sit even at a 10-cent-store lunch counter. The white gangster may. The exceptions, which may be noted in almost any given case, prove nothing. Much of the crime and all of the defiantly loud, boisterous conduct of colored people in public stem directly from the fact that the best men and women of the race are treated the same as the worst. Be law-abiding and respectable? "What does it get you?", they ask.

The author of the "Bedroom Approach to Racism," advocating (seriously) a chemical process to discolor the Negro says: "The issue confronting mankind at the present stage is the demolition of the color line.'" He goes on to say that although Russia has solved the problem, it is much graver in America. There the problem is one of shades, but here it is one of "sharp contrasts." In other words, it is a terrible problem where one person's complexion is entirely different from that of another. The historian of the future, looking back on our age, will

ponder long in an effort to explain how it came about that a supposedly civilized people let the theme of their society be: "You must look just like me, or I won't like you!"

We shall gladly welcome the "demolition of the *color line*"—but color, never! The issue confronting mankind is the abolition of racism, not by destroying color, but by accepting it. General miscegenation looking towards one global color? What good would this do? Did the color of the Czechs, the Poles, the Russians and other European peoples prevent the hatred and war by the Germans? With the plain facts of history and those of everyday life throughout the world before us, with knowledge of the brutality practiced by whites upon whites (as in concentration camps), how can anyone say that amalgamation will solve what is called the race problem? No. The answer is very simple. All that is needed in the United States and the world is the kind of education that teaches us to recognize and respect people according to their worth. It is as simple as that. There is no problem at all.

To white men and women everywhere the following lines from Lillian Smith [3] are commended:

"It must seem to people watching us a strange and curious thing that, when we in America study race relations, we study the Negro—not the white man. . . . No surveys have been made to determine the cause of that desperate feeling of inferiority which

3 *New York Herald Tribune Forum,* October 22, 1944.

drives white men to shout aloud to the whole world that their skin color gives them priority over other human beings. . . . No studies have been made of the white man's infantile desire always to be first, always to sit in the front seat, always to have the biggest and the best of everything. . . We have not yet faced the painful fact that whatever the problem is concerning white people and colored people, it will be found in the ideas and feelings which we white people have about ourselves."

If this obvious truth could reach the minds and hearts of white people everywhere the different races meet, strife between peoples over color would end.

The advice of our friends to take up arms and fight for our rights in this country has already been answered. I have referred to the *"Keepers of the Flame."* They are our hope. They are the reason why we have gladly died in every war of this republic. They were present when the Declaration of Independence was drafted. They were on hand to speak for us in the first Constitutional Convention. They have appeared in every Congress and in every state legislature—even in the South—since 1789. They are present today, fearless and determined that Americans shall be judged by their worth and not by their color. That's why there has been no armed rebellion of colored people since slavery.

We have been living on a great hope and a great

faith. Hope and faith. Patience. Qualifying through education, industry, and moral training for good citizenship. Seventy-five years of qualifying. But the better citizens we become, the more we are oppressed. The forces of reaction and intolerance, temporarily checked by the *New Deal,* are now on the march again, triumphant in the Congress and in strategic points of organized power. They defeated Willkie and Wallace. They so relentlessly ridiculed the *New Deal* that even its founder began to back up and to compromise. They defeated efforts to improve democracy by the abolition of poll tax laws, and they defeated even the attempts at fair employment practices in the United States. These are the real promoters of Communism in this country.

Faith and hope and patience are now dwindling low as the colored people reach the turning point at least. They are being pushed to the hour of decision. They are being forced to take a stand. In the immediate years ahead, we shall either see a radical change in the treatment of colored people throughout the United States or such civil strife as we have never witnessed since the Civil War. That much seems certain. White people North and South, should no longer be deceived by "pay-roll" Negro leaders. They should be warned frankly right now that it is a grave error to assume that because colored men have always fought and died to defend the white man's rights, they will never fight and die for their own. Bilboism is the Ameri-

can form of Nazism. Its advance today will make armed resistance certain, for mass meetings and protests do not affect our little American Hitlers. They think that the war just ended, like the wars of the past, was fought to make secure *their* way of life, and that the people who actually do the fighting—white and colored—are to be pushed back again to a life of precarious existence. They are powerfully organized; their post-war conferences have been held; their plans have been completed. All they have to do now is to buy off, through GI bills of Rights, the returning white veterans, while they are being gradually reintegrated into the same old system; and then, through the vast and powerful means of nation-wide propaganda, political and otherwise, continue to deceive the masses of white people into believing that they are the real rulers and that the suppression of colored people is one way to protect the privileged majority. These demagogs have succeeded in the past. The masses of white people, divided and confused, have believed and followed. Like Hitler, our Rankin-American leaders confidently rely upon the sucker psychology of the masses in following a "fighting" leader. Judging by the past, they have every reason to believe that their future success is assured. Even in the midst of war, they were able to increase racial hate and tensions in this country. They believe that Negroes, being a minority, are helpless and would not dare to resist. They either forget or ignore the

fact that the colored people in the United States can be *forced* to an organized underground resistance that could spread terror and death among their enemies.

My comments on the color craze among Negroes should indicate the kind of mental overhauling which we ourselves need, and should dismiss any idea that the evils of racism are confined entirely to white people. The important fact to remember, however, is that the dominant group is white, controlling the thought and life of the world. The dominant group must accept the responsibility for that control.

We are fools. Regardless of skyscrapers, and airplanes, and universities, and churches, and atomic bombs, and other scientific developments, we are still fools, because we have not yet learned how to live together in this world, each helping the other. . . . So then—

II

If I Were White

First of all, I would use the circumstance of my universal power and control in an effort to reach and lead others to reach a higher level of civilization in my own generation. I would re-examine the culture of the world to determine why cultural refinement and spiritual development of men have lagged centuries behind their intellectual and material progress. In our savage battles for bread and power, we are really no farther advanced than were our cave-man ancestors. We have merely a refinement of methods. Fine, tall buildings. Quicker transportation and communication. More production. More of everything. But we are still scared. Fear of not having enough in a world of plenty. Ready to kill. Life is cheaper than bread and land. We are ready to kill, just like all other animals. Material progress is wonderful. But hearts are untouched. Scared. Even scared of other people of different appearance. Foreigners—an excuse for more brutality, if only in attitudes.

We are fools. Regardless of skyscrapers, airplanes, and universities, churches, and scientific de-

velopments of all kinds, we are still fools, because we have not yet learned how to live together in this world, each helping the other.

I would begin, and begin now, a twentieth century program designed to bring this terrific lag in man's spiritual refinement and cultural development abreast with his material progress.

This would mean an overhauling of our educational system, radio programs, practices of the press, religious objectives, the pattern of the movies, etc.—all directed to the single end of developing good will among all men.

I should understand that, while various peoples differ in color and general appearance, they are not very different in fact.

The great need to know people of other races is somewhat illustrated by the case of the young white man from Mississippi who secured a position in a Federal agency at Washington in 1942. After a year in an office with colored clerks, statisticians, accountants, and economists—an office where there was no segregation—one afternoon he exclaimed: "Well! I just can't hold this in any longer. We've all been more like brothers and sisters here than anything else. So where'n the hell is all this friction that's supposed to exist where white and colored people work together as equals? Looks to me like the whole race question boils down to a simple matter of knowing people better."

It was a spontaneous outburst that he had been

suppressing. And he said many other things: Southern people have been tricked and cheated by leaders like Bilbo, Eastland, and Rankin. These leaders stay in power by pretending that the Negro is a threat to the South, keeping race hatred alive, and then posing as knightly protectors against a racial danger that does not exist. The trick works. It keeps white people from realizing that their interests and those of colored people are identical, that the great common people of both races are victims of an economic and social system that is directly opposed to their progress, that this racism is the one big evil that keeps the South the most backward section in the Nation, and that the solution to the whole question lies in both races joining and working together in some great organization where they can know each other as friends and neighbors.

Most relevant to the point here discussed, however, was what the young man from Jackson, Missisippi said in conclusion: "The reason I completely forget that ten people in this office are colored is that color is about the only difference there is between us—and that simply isn't important. I shall repeat this in Mississippi, even if I get lynched."

So I would not permit any people to be foreigners to me, nor would I expect all people to think and believe exactly as I. In my views and in my relations with non-white peoples, I would take as my everlasting guide the declaration of the great Erasmus that the only way to judge a people is by the noblest

of its sons; for the greatest men and women of each race may be taken as the measure of what the others may become.

I would not regard my being white as a particular virtue which gave me priority over all other people, nor would I expect non-white people to pity their color and try to become white. No people would be expected to change their color, hair, or any other physical characteristics in order to please my vanity. I would respect all races, encouraging every racial group in the national community to rise to man's highest possibilities.

Instead of slavishly following and preaching to justify whatever its community, section, or nation does, the Church should recognize its responsibility to God alone, fearlessly condemning wrong wherever it may arise. . . This would be a return to the real mission of the Church, and to the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

III

If I Were White—and a Churchman:

I would try to free myself from hypocritical lip service to religion and democracy, realizing that my religion has been only an accepted body of principles and ideals which I have never had any intention of following, and that when I speak of such things as the "brotherhood of man", "democracy", and "equality", I am thinking in terms of white people only.

The church follows the crowd and adopts its prejudices. It is growing, but growing weaker because it is now a mere hollow symbol and an echo from an age when religion actually influenced the daily lives of men. The fact that there are millions of non-Christian peoples who actually follow the teachings of Christ more closely than church members should arouse our professional Christians to action.

I should feel uneasy in my church unless I saw at least a few members of other races present; or at least their absence would not mean that they could not attend if they wished to do so. I would promote good will by having periodic exchanges of choirs

and ministers between white and colored churches and between my denomination and that of others, regardless of race or creed. I would insist that my church redeem its traditional stand on the side of special privilege by instigating an overall social crusade for peace and good will among men. This means that instead of slavishly following and preaching to justify whatever its community, section, or nation does, the church would recognize its responsibility to God alone, fearlessly condemning wrong wherever it may arise, and opposing bloody conflicts—even if it called for leaving beautiful pulpits and preaching in the streets, or for marches of ministers of all faiths to preach to congresses and parliaments. This would be a return to the real mission of the church, and to the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

I would stop trying to fool the general public and frighten women by pretending that Negro men are forever seeking to rape white women, while the thousands of newly-born mulattoes in the South each year proclaim to the world that my own race is the great rapist.

IV

If I Were White— and a Southerner:

I would work to retire all Bilboes from public office and then lead the whole nation in a campaign for better race relations, based upon absolute equality of rights, as the surest means to my own security. I would be no more afraid of the Negro vote than the white vote, for the simple reason that I should no longer be "against" the Negro and he would not be against me. We would have a common interest in the development of better homes, better farms, better education, better business and industry—in short, a better Southland, which we both love.

I would stop trying to fool the general public and frighten women by pretending that Negro men are forever seeking to rape white women, while the thousands newly-born mulattoes in the South each year proclaim to the world that my own race is the great rapist. And I would frankly reveal to the public the fact that many of the so-called "rapes" by Negroes are nothing but disclosed love affairs, which, in some cases, had been going on for years. I would abandon the super-conceited idea that to

men of other races, my women must be sacred, untouchable, while, at the same time, I consider their women the legitimate prey of white men.

I would try to understand the nature of the fight against *jim crowism,* even though it might shock my vanity and pre-conceived ideas to learn that colored people generally have not the slightest desire to associate with white people. Negroes will battle for a principle, for rights which should be recognized, but which they have no intention of using. In all places where segregation is banned by law, colored people continue to form "islands" to themselves, just as other minority groups—as the Italians, Irish, Jews, Hungarians, etc. While this self-imposed segregation will certainly disappear as people of different races learn to live together in decency and mutual respect, the fact now is that there is no disposition on the part of most people in minority groups to go or live where they are not wanted. Before they will do so, they will live in slums and suffer as social outcasts.

And as to intermarriage, in states where this is permitted between the races, there are such few marriages between colored and white that to locate them is about as difficult as to find the proverbial needle in a haystack. So, I should come to know that I had been living with fears of my own creation, that the racial threats which loom so large in all my thinking do not exist outside of my mind. I would make these contributions to the peace and

progress of my Southern community and to the peace of the nation and, more particularly, to the peace of my own soul. For I should know that all the wars and bloodshed among various peoples come directly from our little local hatreds and ill will. Like Hugo Black, I would shock my generation by showing the world that a Southerner can rise above race prejudice to the full stature of a statesman.

I would fight to provide jobs by law for every family head and self-dependent person. For a job means life. . . A job is the only kind of unemployment insurance American workers should accept. Jobs guaranteed and assigned by law.

V

If I Were White—and a Worker:

I would join a union dedicated to the task of gaining economic democracy in this country. This would mean a campaign to get all classes of workers into the union, for widespread adult education, for a war on union racketeers, and for united and ceaseless action to put the welfare of the masses above private profits and special privilege. I would aim neither at destroying private enterprise nor at adopting Communism, but I would end the domination of the life of the nation by private enterprise.

The trouble with private enterprise is not in itself but rather in *what we have allowed it to become.* It has grown too big for its pants. It is so big and powerful that it has long since left the realm of economic activities and now controls our lawmakers, our schools, and even the kind of news we read. It has become democracy's one real enemy because, arrogant with power and sure of its permanence as "our way of life", it checks all progressive movements and thus drives people to desperation and to Communism.

My objection to Communism is not an endorse-

ment of capitalism. The simple truth of the matter is that the great common people will never find their salvation merely by changing systems. If the people really ruled in a democracy, for example, there is no benefit enjoyed under Communism which could not be gained in a democracy—*if the people really ruled.* In the United States democracy has never been tried because the people are indifferent and easily led by the loudest speakers. The people are slaves of parties and the parties are the slaves of the bosses and the bosses are the slaves of the special interests. Yet even in this enlightened day the American people really believe that they are the rulers through some such medium as "public opinion".

I would, therefore, break the control of *Big Business* over the government and people of the United States, make private enterprise the chief economic agency for the social welfare of the nation, make the Government the people's organization, existing solely for their welfare, and repeal every law and Constitutional provision which either denied this concept or operate chiefly in the interests of special privilege. Instead of fearing Communism, I would thus challenge it with a better idea.

I would work, and work ceaselessly, for government by the people, which of course we do not have. To this end, leaders in organized labor, in industry, and in politics would be directly controlled by the people, through a new system devised expressly for this purpose.

I would work to remove the question of full employment from the realm of academic discussion and make it a reality. I would fight to provide jobs by law for every family head and self-dependent person. For a job means life. I would help private enterprise provide all the jobs it could through an organized system of finance and studies for economic development and industrial expansion. But where private enterprise, for whatever reason, could not provide jobs, the Government should. Jobs provided by law. That would be my principal aim as a unionist. I would no longer worry about a colored man getting a white man's job, for the simple reason that there would be jobs for all, according to their ability. I would fight to abolish all forms of doles and unemployment insurance, because I would abolish unemployment. I would work to turn the millions of dollars spent on *unemployment* toward *full employment,* and I would not rest until the right to work is changed from the mere words of politicians to an actual fact by a guarantee of jobs by law. This may mean that some individuals and corporations might not make their customary millions of dollars annually, but I would fight for the right to live just the same. For a job, please remember, means life. I would not accept WPA again or any other form of unemployment relief, not even unemployment compensation.

Unemployment compensation is a dole carrying the stigma of charity. It is acceptable only to the

lazy and the ne'er-do-wells. It reduces the status of every recipient from respect to contempt in his community. A job is the only kind of unemployment insurance American workers should accept. The present scheme is a form of legal bribery that postpones the issue, full employment, while at the same time it protects private profit by shifting the financial burden to the Nation.

I would not be slow in grasping the real significance of the statement by Taft, another representative of Big Business in the Congress, when he pointedly asked, "What do we need with sixty million jobs?"

There is a powerful group of capitalists that believes that private enterprise is more secure in its traditional way when millions of jobless men and women walk the streets seeking work. The employed workers can then be more effectively controlled and strikes can be more easily broken.

No W. P. A.! No jobless insurance! No doles or relief of any kind for those able and willing to work! But jobs! Jobs guaranteed and assigned by law!—This should be the battle-cry of the workers of this country.

First of all, it is necessary to understand why private enterprise, begun solely for private gain, must now function also for social welfare in providing jobs or make way for some other system. . . You capitalists did not rise to your present vast wealth and power as the result of your individual initiative and industry alone. You rose with the aid of the wealth of the nation. . . You are in debt to the people of the United States for your very existence.

VI

If I Were White—and a Capitalist:

I would try to save my economic system by overhauling it to meet the insistent demands of an era decidedly different from the one in which it was born. I would turn from my clubs and conferences long enough to re-read history in an effort to determine the tremendously economic significance of the event which the Superintendent of the Census announced when, in 1890, he said that the Frontier was closed. I would honestly try to determine whether that historic event meant that the time would come when the growth of population would make it impossible for private enterprise alone to provide full employment to all. If I found that our system could not provide jobs for all, I certainly would see the futility of my fight to check the Government's effort to help me to do that which I cannot do alone.

Instead of meeting with union leaders only in forced conferences to iron out controversies, I would make these meetings monthly planning conferences for over-all cooperative efforts, not only in solving labor problems, but in production and ex-

pansion. Management and labor would form one organization in which the interests of both could be seen as identical.

A clear understanding and careful consideration of certain basic facts in the history and development of private enterprise would be necessary to understand why private enterprise, begun solely for private gain, must now function also for social welfare in providing jobs or make way for some other system. *John Doe* does not raise funds to start a business in order to provide jobs for his neighbors. He will hire them only if they are needed for his purpose—which is making money for himself and his company. This would be perfectly all right had he been contented to let his private enterprise function solely on a private enterprise basis. But such was not the case.

The American *John Does* of business and industry, whose representatives dominated the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in 1787, made an historic error. They tied in their capitalism with the Constitution of the United States in such a way that no matter how evil capitalism might become, no matter how antagonistic to the people it might develop, it could not be attacked without attacking the Constitution itself.

But this shrewd move by business and industry in grafting capitalism upon a democracy did not stop there. Having first sanctified the system in the Constitution of the United States, they proceeded

forthwith to exact tribute from the Nation as a whole. They demanded and received support by the Government with the people's money. They demanded and received free grants of land which belonged to all of the people, land which held the wealth of the Nation in various kinds of mines, timber, and other natural resources. The history of this country from 1787 to the present time is replete with grants of all kinds to private enterprise—grants of the Nation's wealth that belonged to all of the people.

So you capitalists did not rise to your present vast wealth and power as the result of your individual initiative and industry alone. You rose with the aid of the wealth of the Nation, protected by tariff laws and Supreme Court decisions.

These are the facts which create your social responsibility. You are in debt to the people of the United States for your very existence. I would, therefore, be smart enough to take the lead in making private enterprise a servant of the people. I would not wait for either union pressure or the threat of Communism. And I would not wait to be blasted from my citadel of power by the righteous wrath of the great common people, hitherto docile and meek, but growing tired at last of centuries of economic oppression and special privilege.

I would work for a uniform standard of work, wages, hours, and uniform benefits in public and

private employment, to the end that there would be no particular advantage or disadvantage in working in either. I would attack these problems without fear, confident that there is nothing in this complex field which the honest efforts of man cannot solve.

I would help to free my own race from the heightened illusion of superiority which comes directly from generally presenting other people, --particularly Negroes in the movies, only in inferior or monkeyish roles.

VII

If I Were White—and a Newspaper Publisher

I would print the worthwhile activities of Negroes in the community and the nation just as generously as I play up offenses. If I identified every Negro criminal as Negro, then I would be fair enough to identify other criminals also by their racial origin. I would help to free my own race from the heightened illusion of superiority which comes directly from generally presenting other people, particularly Negroes in the movies, only in inferior or monkeyish roles. For I would know that this truly hellish practice of trying to keep colored people in a most unfavorable light before the public mind will ultimately fail of its purpose, for the masses of white people will continue to advance mentally and at length will come to do their own thinking.

Being controlled by and a definite part of the capitalistic system, I would work to bridge the wide chasm between the interests of private enterprise and those of the great common people, recognizing that the economic principles which served so well during our industrial revolution and westward ex-

pansion will have to be revamped along broader social lines or crash under the weight of a changed social order which demands a new economic approach.

The dominant newspaper policy would be public education to promote social progress. Attacks on social and economic evils which create internal hate and strife would be its program.

I would stop trying to prevent fair play, goodwill and friendship between the races by calling everybody who believes in fair play and equal rights a Communist. I would not thus promote Communism in this country by showing that only Communists believe in equal rights.

VIII

If I Were White— and American:

I would battle to set my own national house in order before trying to regulate the world. If I would lead, I would lead by example. My first step towards world peace would not be either in an international conference or the ratification of a charter, but the abolition of the causes of hatred and strife within the nation. My second step would be work to overhaul that breeding ground of all world strife—the diplomatic system.

I would stop trying to prevent fair play, good will and friendship between the races by calling everybody who believes in fair play and equal rights a Communist. I would not thus promote Communism in this country by showing that only Communists believe in equality of rights.

In things social, I would not let myself be frightened by the bug-a-boo of "social equality", knowing full well that this expression is used to deceive thoughtless people into believing that it proposes a scheme which will force white people to associate with colored people. For I would know that no such things happens *within* any race, to say nothing of

between races. And I should know that I would always have the right inviolate to choose my personal friends and associates; and that these may be all white or all black or all yellow or some of each or nobody at all—just as I wish.

Except in cases of employment where every man and woman has the God-given right to work in order to live, one's association with others is a mutually voluntary thing. Laws do not apply. The question of equal rights or "social equality"—whatever this is—has no bearing upon this kind of social relationship. Friendship is spontaneous, and can not be made or regulated by law. And friendship refuses to be confined by race. Wherever members of different races meet as equals and come to know one another, friendship will be formed as the finest characters attract each other. Southern demagogs like Bilbo and Rankin know this better than most other people. Hence we have *jim-crow* laws to separate white and colored people. Southern Bourbon rule rests upon the separation of the races which keeps prejudice alive. These demagogs need millions of poor white people hating millions of colored people. They control the people because they control all of the strategic points of control in the nation—the press, the radio, the schools, and *even the church.* The control of life by the demagogs of special privilege *for* special privilege will continue just as long as the masses of white and colored people remain divided, hating each other for no real reason

at all. This is the real issue in segregation—a mighty far cry from any desire of colored people as such to associate with white people as such.

As to personal friendship, this writer has seven close friends who are of different races and nationalities—French, Italian, Swedish, English, Japanese, Jewish, and German (yes, German!)—Americans all. They are not mere acquaintances. We are friends who dine together, go around together to shows and other places of recreation: and the home of each is open to the others. There is not a Communist in the group. We are the New Americans, freed at last from the chains of hate. And I am what one writer called the "sharp contrast." I am black. Democracy must include my right to be black. I don't want to be white, to be "lightened" to please little prejudiced souls, to be bio-chemically discolored in any way. I am quite happy as I am—believe me! Indeed, I believe that this fine friendship between eight young Americans of different races is based very largely upon the fact of difference, each having something slightly different to offer. If I turned up one day biochemically whitened, the others would not like it. They would not want me white any more than I should wish to be white. Neither would they want the eyes of the Japanese straightened, as the writer of the article suggested. We wish each person to be just what he is—and to like being what he is. The important point is that changing eye-slants, hair, and color is quite

needless, since nobody in the group considers himself or his particular appearance better than anyone else. Each respects the other for what he is, not how he looks.

Unless this spirit extends to the whole community, to the nation, and to the world, the white race, under the guise of civilization, will lead mankind to its doom. What does it hope to achieve by its present policies of suppression? What are its fears? For example, why the sheer idiocy that, fearful lest too many Negroes might become heroes or cover themselves with glory in battle on land and sea, would cause white America to prefer to send thousands of its own sons down in blazing death? "Surely, it is an awful question, or there is none such this side of the grave." For the vast number of Negro soldiers and sailors who were held back in the comparative security of labor and service battalions could have easily lightened the burden and shared the perils of white troops by equally sharing in combat. America is paying and has always paid an awful price for its racism. For it thousands of white boys will never see home again.

We are fools. There is no race problem. There is only a subborn unwillingness to treat others as we should like to be treated. There is much which the Negro cannot do about this situation. There is no need to call him into inter-racial meetings. He is already too much devoted to the white man for his own good. Even the prejudice he shows is merely a form of retaliation.

In these pages, then, I have pointed up the trouble and pointed to the road out. I did not discover that road. Christ laid it out, and many of the giants of this nation have followed it in an effort to improve life. John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, William Lloyd Garrison, John Brown, John Greenleaf Whittier, Weldell Willkie, Eleanor Roosevelt, Pearl Buck, Lillian Smith, Henry Wallace,—an endless roll call of white Americans who have fought against ignorance and stupidity. The living have caught the spirit of the dead. Those who died in the work of bettering life. They are trying to widen the gap between man and beast, trying to find what things are of most worth. They discovered friendship, good will and peace among men. It is a road leading uphill to a better world. Infinite wisdom calls to us through the years:

Go follow in their train!

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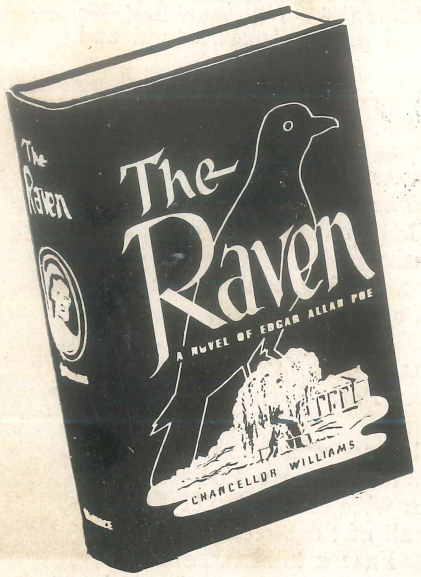

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